

Trabajo Fin de Grado

Flash Fiction: An Approach to the Genre through the Translation

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Resumen

Los orígenes del microrrelato, *flash fiction* en inglés, y los del cuento corto, se remontan a la Antigua Grecia y la Antigua India aunque es durante los siglos 19 y 20 cuando el cuento aparece y se forma como el género que se conoce hoy en día. Es a finales del siglo 20 y principios del 21 cuando los microrrelatos, micro ficción, *short-short story* o *flash fiction* aparecen como un subgrupo del cuento corto.

Este es un género que se caracteriza por su brevedad, mucho más que el cuento corto, y su cercanía con la poesía ya que ambos comparten la brevedad y la necesidad de usar palabras estéticas, cargadas de significado y que sugieran y evoquen escenarios, imágenes y sensaciones.

Traducir este tipo de género es complicado, casi tanto como escribirlo ya que requiere concentración y una gran capacidad de síntesis para narrar lo que se quiera narrar y respetar el límite de palabras, hasta 300. La experiencia de traducir estos dos textos, Witness, Testigo en español, de John Edgar Wideman y Altar Call, Llamada al altar, de Steven Sherrill ha sido un gran ejercicio de escritura creativa y análisis de los textos puesto que éstos necesitan ser leídos con cuidadosa atención por parte del traductor para poder entender su significado y ser capaz de transmitirlo desde el texto original al traducido. El objetivo de este trabajo es traducir estos dos textos a la lengua española sin sobrepasar el límite de 300 palabras o menos, así como transmitir la intención y el propósito del texto original al texto traducido.

Abstract:

The origins of the flash fiction, and those of the short story, date back to Ancient Greek and Ancient India although it is during the 19th and the 20th century that the short story will appear and be formed as the genre known nowadays. It is at the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st when the micro fiction, short-short story or flash fiction appears as a subgroup of the short story.

This is a genre characterised by its brevity, much more than the short story, and with a close relationship to poetry as they both share its brevity and need for aesthetical, full-of-meaning words that suggest in most cases and evoke the reader images, settings and feelings.

Translating such a genre is complicated, almost as much as it is to write it as it requires focus and a great capacity to synthesise what wants and needs to be said in order to fulfil the limited word count, 300 or less words. The experience of translating these two texts, Witness by John Edgar Wideman and Altar Call by Steven Sherrill, has been a great exercise both in creative writing and analysis of the texts as they need to be read with careful attention in order to understand their meanings and to be able to convey them from the original texts to the translated ones. The aim of this dissertation is to translate these two texts into the Spanish language obeying the 300-word limit, as well as to carry their original intent and purpose to the translated version.

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1.Introduction

1.1 Origin and history of the genre

Flash fiction, according to the MacMillan dictionary, is “a style of literature in which stories are extremely short and often consist of less than 300 words”. The origins of the short-short Story, also called flash fiction or micro fiction can be located in fables, anecdotes or mythic tales such as Aesop’s Fables written in 620 and 564 BCE or Pachatantra or Jataka tales in India, written between 200 BC and 300 AD and 300 BC and 400 AD respectively. Before all of this appeared, short oral stories were also told by our ancestors and even during the times the parables, anecdotes and tales were being written, oral tales existed still.

And, although during the Medieval Ages stories that are the predecessors of the short stories were written, it is the publication of Walter Scott’s *The Two Drovers* in the 19th century that marks the apparition of the short story as we know it nowadays. During this century the short story suffers a decline and rises again at the end of it when writers from Europe and the United States began exploring with and writing this genre. It is Edgar Allan Poe in this same century who writes and theorises about the genre of the short story, although it is not until the 20th century, having made apparitions throughout history, that this genre is going to remerge especially in the 1920s, thanks to the *Cosmopolitan* magazine, and the 1930s when it was included in anthologies like *The American Short Short Story*.

From then on the genre won’t disappear, in Japan, for example, the genre was introduced after the II World War by Michio Tsuzuki, and in the rest of the world

writers like Kafka, Borges or Cortázar will begin writing short stories. As time progresses and gets closer to the 21st century, investigations and researches are launched in order to understand more of this genre, scholars and writers begin to meet in order to discuss and compare works and an international day for the short story is decided. The genre will soon begin changing which will lead towards the addition of the short-short story or flash fiction as a sub-group of short story. In the 21st century the short-short story gains strength thanks to the invention of the internet and, later, to the smartphones and apps that will facilitate its consumption as well as the change in the consumption of literature thanks to the e-books and e-publishing methods that allow authors to self-manage their publications as well as engage more directly with the audience.

1.2. Characteristics of the genre

Flash fiction is a genre characterised by its brevity, in contrast with the short story, which length usually goes between 1000 and 4000 words, flash fiction's length ranges from 500 words to 250 words, some short-short stories are as short as just 6 words. The length is usually defined by the organisation that publishes the story and/or the authors themselves. One example of a 6-word story is actually the most famous one: "For sale: baby shoes, never worn." This extremely short story has everything that characterises the genre: its brevity, as stated above, a beginning, middle and end; and a twist or a surprise at the end. Although the former 6-word story has been attributed to Hemingway there is no record of him actually publishing it.

Even though short stories and short-short stories may be similar in the sense that they are neither a novel, nor a novella, length is the main difference between these two genres and is from this fact that the rest of their characteristics come from. Since short

stories have more length than short-short stories, they have more room for story, while a short-short story or flash fiction has a very limited space which calls for at least one character, a problem that generates tension and an ending or a resolution. Short stories are closely related to the novel, having more room for plot development and characters, whereas flash fictions are closer to poetry as Nuala Ni Chonchuir expresses so beautifully in his article “Word for Word: The Rise and Rise of Flash Fiction”: “Though short on words, the flash story is long on depth and should sting like good poetry. Punchy, succinct and surprising, the best flash will shift the reader’s heart but also keep it beating hard.”

Short-short stories as well as short stories not only have in common brevity but also unity, this is a feature that characterises both genres and that emphasises the fact that both can be read in one sitting. It allows the story to flow and the reader to really focus on what is happening, excluding from their attention anything that is not the story itself. That is what is called “totality of the short story and totality of interest” as Abbasi and Al-Sharqi (2016, p. 3) explain, referencing Poe’s *The Philosophy of Composition* (1846).

There are several varieties of short-short Story that include: “six-word story” (6 words, referenced above), “twitterature” (before 140, now 280 characters), “dribble” (50 words), “drabble” (100 words), “sudden fiction” (750 words) and “flash fiction” (1000 words). In relation to the two latter terms, Abbasi and Al-Sharqi explain that:

Shapard and Thomas (2007) divide two sub-categories of sudden fiction that stemmed from the short fiction and differed not only in length, but also in nature. [...] flash fiction and new sudden fiction. Flash fiction included stories of up to 750 words and encapsulated a single idea or a single moment; they often portrayed a reversal of the

story plot's initial circumstances. New sudden fiction included stories of up to 1500 words and shared features with the traditional short story.

The length of this short fictions really depends on the author or the organisations, magazines and journals behind publishing and organising contests. Twitter as well as the foundation of online magazines dedicated to this genre have provided the perfect scenario for short-short stories to flourish. Flash fiction is a challenge in the creative sense as it limits the author's use of words, having to find ways of telling emotions and events with the less amount of words possible, not explicitly talking about experiences but hinting at them, leaving the rest to the reader's imagination to fill in the gaps. Hence its relation to poetry, which, due to the characteristics of its genre, forces its authors to choose carefully their wording to fully convey the meaning in a limited amount of words as well. Is about this that Abbasi and Al-Shariq reference in their essay "Merging of the Short-Story Genres" (2016, p. 4) from Guimaraes (2009): "The short-short story is a hybrid genre in which poetic condensation is merged with the fictional narrative and the journalistic writing style."

Flash fiction or short-short fiction is then a mixture of poetry and narrative, it has some of the conventions of the narrative style such as a beginning, middle and end, as well as a character and a plot development although shortened by the limitations of word count typical of the genre, but it also shares the poetic usage of words, symbolism and adjectives, using less but more intentional words to convey meaning. It also needs concentration when reading, deep thought so as to understand it fully. Flash fiction's stories are not limited by a specific genre either, they can be fantasy, thriller, crime, science fiction, monologues. They can be irreverent, fictional, realistic, humorous, atypical... Similarly, the names used to refer to this specific genre are as varied as its own stories and they differ from country to country, flash fiction in the United States,

microrrelatos in Spain, smoke-long stories in China, among many others. The most usual themes that can be found in flash fiction are gender, race, suicide, isolation, surreal situations and relationships to name a few.

Short-short stories, according to Abbasi and Al-Shariq have five characteristic elements being “setting, characters, conflict, resolution and suggestion.” (2015, p. 54) Setting determines where the story is happening, in this kind of genre the setting is usually specified by a short amount of information, a line at most. The title can be used to give this information, the characters may help as well, events that are popular for their place or time may also help reduce the amount of words as well as placing the story in context. Characters are also necessary for every work of fiction, in flash fiction, due to its brevity, only a character is needed although there can be more. Unlike novels, which, thanks to their extension can make their characters change and develop with the story, this genre cannot have that. Instead, characters, which not need to be limited by humans or animals, are seen in a fleeting moment in time which leaves no room for them to change.

Conflict is needed in short-short stories as it creates engagement with the reader, it can come from an argument between characters, between two different ways of thinking, between two different opinions, etc. Resolution is special in literature as it gives closure to the reader, in flash fiction is even more important as its length calls for a story that is memorable for the reader. Usually, endings in flash fiction have an element of surprise, and nowadays writers of this genre pride themselves in surprising the reader by coming from a different angle, catching the reader unprepared. Both, giving closure and not, are characteristics of the genre, writers like to both give the reader a sense of closure and leaving them with more doubts and questions than answers. Finally, suggestion is also an important characteristic of short-short stories, suggestions are vital to these

extremely short narratives as they help the reader feel what the character may be feeling, to understand the story or to even serve the resolution, indicating the reader which way the story is going to end to suddenly change it completely, always within reason in the story.

Time is another distinctive feature of short-short stories, opposite to what happens to time in novels, where readers are the ones going through it, in flash fiction it is the time that moves the reader through the story, according to Abbasi and Al-Shariq (2015, p 52), moving them through the story, slowing down, accelerating and even stopping completely.

1.3. Justification of the dissertation:

The author believes that nowadays' way of consuming information and media is the perfect ground for the flash fiction genre to flourish as people is now used to have all the information at a glance, videos and writings have limitations of length both in characters and minutes and even seconds so the new generations are growing up exposed to short, condensed and, in some cases, fleeting content. It is with that idea in mind that this paper was started and, after an unsuccessful search for an interesting short story or novella, that the idea of translating short-short stories or flash fiction came to my mind. English is a very practical and concise language with words so full of meaning and little need for connectors and conjunctions that translating those short stories, of 300 or less words, to a language as extensive as the Spanish language, opposite to English in matters of connectors and conjunctions, proposed a challenge just like that of the flash fiction authors. The thrive of flash fiction, fuelled by our way of consuming media nowadays is an incentive as I expect this kind of writing to become

something studied later on, even in university degrees such as the one I am finishing myself, which has many courses on literature and which does not dwell too long on the importance and rise of this genre.

In this paper two short-short stories from the collection New Micro Exceptionally Short Fiction edited by Robert Scotellaro and James Thomas will be translated from English to Spanish and a commentary of the translation process will be added to discuss the problems and decisions encountered while translating them. The two short-short stories will be Witness by John Edgar Wideman published in the collection Briefs: Stories for the Palm of the Mind by the same author and Altar Call by Steven Sherril, published in the collection Sudden Stories: The Mammoth Book of Miniscule Fiction edited by Dinty W. Moore

1.4. Methodology:

As stated above, the initial idea was to find an interesting short story that would pose translation problems because of the use of humour, the themes it had, maybe because of the language used in the sense of slang, invented words or even regionalisms and accents. After searching for an interesting short story the New Micro Exceptionally Short Fiction collection appeared and, after doing some research on the genre it was decided to translate at least two of the short stories. The collection includes 133 short-short stories or micro-fiction as it is called in the title, all of them of 300 or less words. The methodology followed was reading the 133 stories and choosing those which might cause a problem during its translation. Once this process was done, thirteen stories were chosen which, after a careful rereading and thought about the possible translations were reduced to four. Of those four, two were the ones chosen as they had the most

interesting problems and the other two were kept in case they were needed to add more information and discussion to the dissertation.

For the translation of the texts, the websites *WordReference*, *Linguee*, *American Heritage Dictionary* as well as the *Oxford Dictionary*, the *Merrian-Webster Dictionary* and the *MacMillan Dictionary* were used as consultation and translation of words.

2. Translation and commentary

2.1. Information about the authors:

John Edgar Wideman, writer known for the elaborated style with which he writes his novels, short stories and micro fictions on the experiences of African American lives in nowadays' United States is the first author whose text is going to be translated and analysed in this dissertation. His works address the difficulties African American men suffer in general, as can be seen in his first novel *A Glance Away* (1985), which narrates what a day in the lives of a black man who just came back from spending a year in a drug rehabilitation centre and a white homosexual man is like. He also addresses his own experiences in his works, his novel *Brothers and Keepers* (1984) is a meditation on the relationship with his brother who was in jail serving a life sentence.

Altar Call is the second and last short-short story that is going to be analysed in this dissertation, it was written by Steven Sherrill, an artist and writer who currently teaches at Penn State University in Iowa. Not much more can be found about him on the Internet, he has written several novels and a book of poems as well as articles for the

TATE Magazine. His most famous work *The Minotaur Takes a Cigarette Break* is also his first novel and has been translated into eight languages.

2.2. Original texts and their translation

2.2.1 Witness

<u>Witness</u>	<u>Testigo</u>
John Edgar Wideman	John Edgar Wideman
Source Text	Target Text
Sitting here one night six floors up on my little balcony when I heard shots and saw them boys running. My eyes went straight to the lot beside Mason's bar and I saw something black not moving in the weeds and knew it was dead. A fifteen-year-old boy the papers said. Whole bunch of sirens and cops and spinning lights the night I'm talking about, I watched till after they rolled him away and then everything got quiet again as it ever gets around here so I'm sure the boy's people not out there that night.	Aquí sentado estaba una noche en mi balcón de la sexta planta cuando escuché tiros y vi a esos chicos corriendo. Los ojos se me fueron directamente al solar al lado del bar de Mason y vi algo negro que no se movía entre los hierbajos y supe que estaba muerto. Salió en los periódicos que era un chico de 15 años. Había un montón de sirenas y maderos y luces girando esa noche, me quedé mirando hasta después de que se lo llevaran en una camilla y entonces todo volvió a la calma así que seguro que la

<p> Didn't see them till next morning when I'm looking down at those weeds and a couple's coming slow on Frankstown with a girl by the hand, had to be the boy's baby sister. They pass terrible Mason's and stop right at the spot the boy died. Then they commence to swaying, bowing, hugging, waving their arms about. Forgive me, Jesus, but look like they grief dancing, like the sidewalk too cold or too hot they had to jump around not to burn up. How'd his people find the exact spot. Did they hear my old mind working to lead them, guide them along like I would if I could get up out of this damn wheelchair and take them by the hand. </p>	<p> gente del chico no estaba por ahí esa noche. No los vi hasta la mañana siguiente cuando estaba mirando a los hierbajos y una pareja venía lentamente desde Frankstown con una niña de la mano, tenía que ser la hermanita del chico. Pasan por delante del bar del terrible Mason y paran justo delante del lugar donde murió el chico. Entonces empiezan a mecerse, a inclinarse, a abrazarse, a agitar los brazos. Que Dios me perdone, pero parecía un baile de pena, como si la acera estuviera demasiado fría o demasiado caliente y tuvieran que saltar para no quemarse. Como encontraría su gente el sitio exacto. Oyeron a mi vieja mente tratando de llevarles, guiándoles como lo haría yo si pudiera levantarme de esta maldita silla de ruedas y llevarles de la mano. </p>
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2.2.1.1. Commentary of Witness:

The previous text, Witness, belongs to a collection of Short-Short Stories by
 John Edgar Wideman called Briefs: Stories for the Palm of the Mind published in 2010.

The Micro-fiction story narrates how an old man witnesses the murder of a young boy and the following mourning of his family. This text was written in a colloquial style as the man narrating the story seems to be a normal person, not a scholar or a very educated person but a simple neighbour from either a normal or ghetto neighbourhood. Although the race or colour of both the victim and his family and that of the witness is not made explicit, the author of the micro-story is black and, as informed in the information about the authors above, since he usually writes about the lives of black people is safe to assume all the characters are black. This influences the translation as the language used by the protagonist is then full of cultural connotations. It was important then, for the translator of this text, to try and convey as much as possible those nuances and characteristics of the source text. That was the main aim for this translation: to try and recreate the speaking style of the protagonist as well as keeping the word count within the 300 words as do all of the flash fiction stories present in the collection used as source. This text is also written from the perspective of an old man who is thinking about what he is seeing, so his thoughts sometimes omit commas and points, as if to recreate the way his mind processes the events and reacts to them. Keeping the word count below 300 words was by no means difficult as no changes and modifications in its length were necessary once the first translation was finished. During the second translation some changes were made as to keep the meaning of the Target Text, (from now on TT), true to the Source Text, (from now on ST). The main difficulties were the formal aspects of stylistic nature as the TT had to show that the protagonist does not speak perfectly, it uses colloquialism and expressions that are not grammatically perfect. For that reason, I decided to translate “Sitting here” (line 1) as “Aquí sentado estaba”, it is a faithful translation in the sense that the words are translated word by word but, to try and give a sense of colloquialism, I decided to

change the order and place the adjective at the beginning of the sentence in Spanish as usually one would say: “estaba aquí sentado”, thus maintaining “the deviation from the Source Language norms” (Newmark, 46).

Translating the word “cops” (line 8) to Spanish “maderos” was a hard choice as cops is really common to use in the United States, from where the author of the text is and from where I think the characters may be as well, but in Spanish “madero” is not that used, still, with the intention to being faithful to the text as a whole and its characteristics I decided to choose “madero” and not “policía” to try and make the TT convey the same feeling as the ST.

“Rolled him away” (line 10) was also a difficult translation as until the very last review of the translation it was translated as “se lo llevaron rodando” as I was trying to keep the literal meaning of the ST but, finally decided to use transposition and changed it to “se lo llevaran en una camilla” as it still was faithful to the ST but it still accorded with the TT.

Finally, “look like they grief dancing” (line 23) was translated as “parecía un baile de pena” using a transposition to change the adjective and verb of the ST to two nouns in the TT. The gerund “dancing” offers several choices of translation but I decided to translate it to a noun as this translation has less possibilities of being misinterpreted as the family “dancing badly” instead of dancing as a ritual for their grief.

To sum up this commentary on the translation of Witness, word count extension and faithfulness to the feelings and culture wanted to be conveyed in this text were the main aims in mind when translating the text. It was not a complicated text in the length sense although maintaining a colloquial tone during the translation, at the same level as the ST, was the most complicated aspect of this translation. Each decision was carefully

made to ensure the desired result and to carry on the meaning from the ST to the TT which resulted in the use of transpositions by changing the grammatical category of some words as well as cultural equivalents in the case of “cops” and “maderos”.

2.2.2 Altar Call

<u>Altar Call</u>	<u>Llamada al altar</u>
Steven Sherril	Steven Sherril
Source Text	Target Text
<p>When Reverend Smawley plucked his right eyeball out—the plastic one—to hold over the congregation, the church-honeys swooned. Half the back-sliders, purse-lipped and guilt-washed, like they just eked out a church-poot. The others, whooping like no tomorrow. From the edge of the sagging stage, I heard everything clear as a bell. The tent went quiet. True reverence. Anticipation. Then a soft-wet thwack as the eyeball left the socket; that was all she wrote. Oh the weeping and wailing.</p>	<p>Cuando el reverendo Smawley se sacó el ojo derecho, el de plástico, para contener a la congregación, los feligreses se embelesaron. La mitad de los reincidentes, labios fruncidos y rostro culpable, como si acabaran de exclamar desesperados. Los otros, gritando de alegría como si no hubiera un mañana. Desde el borde del hundido escenario, escuché todo claramente. La tienda calló. Veneración absoluta. Anticipación. En ese momento se oyó, húmedo y suave, al ojo abandonando la cuenca; y ya. Ay, los</p>

<p>Besides folding chairs and passing collection plates, I drove, and played the organ. But—self-taught—by that time in the sermon, all I could do was keep up. Smawley stomping, hollering how “Jesus come down, as a piece of baling wire, and took that eye.” When medical science filled up the hole with a worthless bauble, Jesus came back. Blessed him with <i>special</i> sight. “Come on! Look into this hole! See for yourself” Every night, his good eye patched, he gave the call. Sinners spilled into the aisles ready for miracles, even meagre ones. Grocery lists, testimonials and prayer requests, offered up to that empty socket. Smawley read them all. “Go home,” he’d say. “Take them little red panties off and burn them. B’lieve on the Lord.” “Turn away from that bottle,” he’d say. “Towards Calvary.” I looked into the hole one time. We’d stopped for gas. I came out with two cans of beer. A bag of pork grinds. Set them on the roof of the Plymouth while I</p>	<p>lloros y lamentos.</p> <p>Además de doblar sillas y pasar cestos, conducía y tocaba el órgano. Pero ya sabía que a esas alturas del sermón poco podía hacer mas que intentar seguir el ritmo. Smawley, pisoteando y dando voces, hablaba de como:</p> <p>—Jesús vino, como un alambre, y se me llevó el ojo.</p> <p>Cuando los médicos le llenaron el agujero con una bola sin valor Jesús volvió. Bendiciéndolo con visión especial.</p> <p>—¡Ven! ¡Mira dentro del agujero! Mira por ti mismo.</p> <p>Cada noche, el ojo bueno bajo el parche, daba la llamada. Los pecadores se desparramaban en los pasillos buscando milagros, incluso exiguos. Listas de la compra, testimonios y solicitudes de plegarias, ofrecidas al agujero vacío. Smawley las leía todas.</p> <p>—Vete a casa—decía Smawley—.</p> <p>Quítate esas braguitas rojas y quémalas. Cree en el Señor.</p>
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<p>pumped. The Reverend, wore slap out from doing the Lord's work, clutching his thick Bible, slept. Head laid against the window. That eye—open—</p> <p>Gaped heavenward. I knelt on the oil-stained pavement, pressed my nose to the glass. I looked into that hole. I seen it all. You better believe it.</p>	<p>—Aléjate de la botella —decía—. Mira hacia el Calvario.</p> <p>Miré dentro del agujero una vez.</p> <p>Habíamos parado a repostar. Salí con dos latas de cerveza. Un paquete de cortezas de cerdo. Las dejé en el techo del Plymouth mientras repostaba. El reverendo, agotado de hacer el trabajo del Señor, su Biblia agarrada, dormía. La cabeza apoyada en la ventana. Ese ojo abierto hacia el cielo. Me arrodillé en el suelo aceitoso, presioné la nariz contra el cristal. Miré dentro del agujero. Lo vi todo. Créetelo.</p>
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2.2.2.1. Commentary of Altar Call:

The previous text belongs to the collection Sudden Stories: The Mammoth Book of Miniscule Fiction edited by Dinty W. Moore. It talks about a reverend, his congregation and the person who helps him set his tent where he holds Mass. This reverend is special, Jesus himself took his eye and when a prosthetic eye was given to him, he came again and blessed him with vision, now he spends his time helping people see by looking at his hole.

The text is full of compound words that are really difficult to translate as they are quite regional. This complicated the process of translation and required extended searching time as to try and find their meanings. Sometimes I was successful in finding it, others not so much and I was left to translate freely and from context as I was not able to find what some expressions meant. Apart from that, the text was easy to translate. The main aim when translating Altar Call was to keep the word count within 300 words, as that is the main goal of this paper, to translate and analyse micro-fiction in English into Spanish, but also I wanted to be able to translate faithfully the general meaning of the ST into the TT, in this sense this text was easier than the previous one since its difficulty lied in keeping the word count and finding the correct words for several terms. Some of the difficulties encountered in this translation were linguistic in nature while others were extralinguistic as well and once the text was finished in its translation, the difficulty lied in shortening the length of the text as it was too long. The first problem encountered while translating was the term “back-sliders” (line 4) and its translation, a quick search in some translation engines such as WordReference and Linguee were not successful, those are used firstly as it helps reduce the amount of time spent searching for translations. The solution was to search in Google for monolingual dictionaries and the search was successful when using the American Heritage Dictionary for the English Language.

“Purse-lipped” and “guilt-washed” (line 5) were the next difficult terms to translated, not so much purse-lipped as guilt-washed which I finally decided to translate as “con rostro culpable” this is a transposition from two adjectives in the ST to a prepositional sentence as the other alternative that was considered “bañados en culpa” was too literal. “Chuch-poot” (line 6) was the most difficult words encountered while translating this text, several searches were made in order to try and find its meaning to no avail, from

quick searches in engines mentioned earlier such as WordReference and Linguee to monolingual dictionaries like the Merriam-Webster, the Oxford Dictionary and the American Heritage Dictionary for the English Language. There was also a quick search done in the site Reddit as it is usually a website where people from all parts of the United States and the rest of the world post problems and comments, in hopes of finding the word but my search gave no fruits. Then I decided to do a free translation based on its context and what I could guess from it settling for “feligreses” as it was plausible when reading the text as a whole.

“That was all she wrote” (line 12) was another problem found while translating, at first it was used a literal, word-for-word translation but as there I conducted a more thorough search I decided to translate it as first “eso fue todo”, a more literal translation of a cultural equivalence. During the shortening of the translation as I had used more words than I allowed myself decided to opt for a more concise translation “y ya”, although it is not a perfect translation it adds to the tension created by the previous choices in translation that reflect that atmosphere evoked in the ST resulting in an anticlimactic end, breaking the anticipation and leaving it low instead of high in the end.

The rest of the text was easier in terms of translation, it was the editing at the end to make the word count fit that was more complicated, many articles and prepositions had to be omitted for the text and the sentences to still make sense and fit the limits. There were changes in already translated sentences like “we’d stopped for gas” (lines 35 and 36) which had been translated initially as “habíamos parado a echar gasolina” and had to be changed to “habíamos parado a repostar”. Lines 16 and 17 with the sentence “But—self-taught—by that time in the sermon, all I could do was keep up.” had to be completely paraphrased, at first it had read “Pero, autodidacta, para cuando había llegado ese momento del sermón yo ya sabía que lo único que podía hacer era intentar

seguir el ritmo.” Admittedly, if it wasn’t for the necessary rewriting of the phrase, this maybe would have made it to the final version which proves that rethinking, revising and putting limits and challenges does help the translator, and the author improve. Finally, to conclude the commentary it is necessary to highlight the already mentioned difficulty of translating such regional and even slang words, English is definitely a language full of meaning in simple words and it has been a challenge to try to convey the general meaning of the ST into the TT keeping in mind the word count. The main translation techniques used were transposition as well as free translation which includes the paraphrasing of lines 16 and 17.

Both texts translated and analysed are examples of flash fiction or short-short stories, in these we can see the characteristics mentioned in the introduction that are native of this genre. They are short, 218 and 300 respectively, both have a beginning which sets the story in a few words, a middle, that is a conflict that rises tension, in the case of Witness the death of the young boy, in the case of Altar Call the sermon as well as the protagonist looking into the reverend’s eyehole. Characters are also present in the stories, all of the human and all of them crucial to the plot as it could only be with Micro Fiction and suggestions appear as well, in the case of Witness and, in the author’s opinion with the fact that the killing has been a racist crime and in the case of Altar Call with the possibility of the reverend being a fraud. The element of surprise, a characteristic of this genre also appears at the ending of the stories, the man that has witnessed all is in a wheelchair and cannot do anything to help his neighbours and the eyehole blessed by Jesus Christ in Altar Call it really is blessed and allows you to see. Writing this kind of genre, it is really a challenge both because of the limited word count and the need to have a story that is interesting, that catches the attention of the

reader in really few words and that, in addition, surprises them and leaves them thinking about it for a while. Writers that produce such works are trained and are able to concentrate in what is really important for the plot, leaving unnecessary additions out of it so the reader can experience focusing on the story and nothing else. Similarly, when it comes to translating a text like this the translator needs to be in the same state of mind as the writer since we are the transition between a text in the source language and the text in the target language.

Translating this two texts has been an exercise of creative writing in a sense, as well as a revival of those times analysing and reading between the lines of compulsory readings for my literature classes. Trying to see what the author tried to express by choosing certain words so that the same intention can be conveyed in the TT as if it was the original text. It has been a very rewarding experience to face the translation of these two text and cope with the difficulties which arose while rendering them.

3. Conclusion

3.1. Summary of the genre and its characteristics

To finish this dissertation, I would like to remind the characteristics of the genre written above: short-short stories is a relatively new genre in the sense of its length as its origins, tied to those of the short story are quite old. In the old times, in Greece, Egypt and India, short stories were produced, some oral, our flash fiction's predecessor, some written, our short stories predecessor. Then during the medieval times and then during the 19th century giving the genre of the short story the first example of it as we know it. The short story genre will be further developed and used throughout the 19th and 20th century to gradually separate and begin to form a sub-group and then a new genre: The short-short story or flash fiction. From then on this new genre will be studied, discussed and shared to the point it will have an international day, biannual conventions and numerous magazines and journals dedicated to it as well as contest held by important newspapers and awards celebrating extraordinary writers. This is a genre characterised by its brevity as well as the unity necessary to catch the undivided attention from the reader in order to understand fully the nuances and suggestions of the texts. flash fiction texts are characterised by a quickly done setting, a line is all it takes to give the reader context, characters, only one is enough, that do not need to be limited to human or animals, a tension designed to, again, catch the reader's attention, usually coupled with a surprise, normally at the end, which leads us to the

resolution, needed to leave the reader satisfied or contemplative and finally an element of suggestion, to add hinted emotions, notions and feelings that cannot be explicitly old because of its length.

3.2. Main aims of this dissertation

One of the main goals of those translations was to convey the original meaning of the source text into the target text with all its nuances and cultural differences which was challenging in the first text. Witness is a text full of colloquial terms, as well as grammatically incorrect sentences, it is a crucial part of the text from my point of view so that the characteristic way of expressing himself of the narrator was needed to be conveyed through the target text. It was done by changing the word order in the sentences to make them more informal, choosing more colloquial and slang terms such as “madero” instead of “policía” when translating “cops”.

Another main goal for the translation of these two texts was keeping the word count within 300 words since it was the limitations the authors had themselves when writing the original text and the main purpose of the translation is to allow readers to experience the same others do even when they do not share the language. For the second text, Altar Call, this was the main difficulty, compound words with so much meaning, motion verbs and especially regional and slang words made the translation more difficult.

Rethinking and rewriting was necessary for this part so as to make the translation maintain the word limit. It was necessary to omit certain articles and connectors as well as conjunctions in order to keep a 300-word count. But not only the word count was a problem encountered, there was a compound word that, no matter how much I searched for its definition, nothing appeared: “church-honey” had no translation apparently, not even meaning and so I was forced to translate it freely, only based on the context of the

story as well as the words around it to try and understand what it meant. “feligreses” was the translation for what I opted, as it made sense in the text as a whole.

3.3. Personal opinion

It is a complicated genre to write but delightful to read if done well. As it is complicated to write, it is almost equally complicated to translate as the word count and the election of perfect, full of meaning and suggestive words are necessary to be taken into account. For me, both texts have made me rethink and reread, presenting different problems in each one of them.

Translating extremely short fiction has been an interesting and learning experience for me as it has made me realise the importance of carefully and well-chosen words and how it affects and influences the final translation of a text.

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5. Anexes

5.1 Witness

Witness by John Edgar Wideman

Sitting here one night six floors up on my little balcony when I heard shots and saw them boys running. My eyes went straight to the lot beside Mason's bar and I saw something black not moving in the weeds and knew it was dead. A fifteen-year-old boy the papers said. Whole bunch of sirens and cops and spinning lights the night I'm talking about, I watched till after they rolled him away and then everything got quiet again as it ever gets around here so I'm sure the boy's people not out there that night. Didn't see them till next morning when I'm looking down at those weeds and a couple's coming slow on Frankstown with a girl by the hand, had to be the boy's baby sister. They pass terrible Mason's and stop right at the spot the boy died. Then they commence to swaying, bowing, hugging, waving their arms about. Forgive me, Jesus, but look like they grief dancing, like the sidewalk too cold or too hot they had to jump around not to burn up. How'd his people find the exact spot. Did they hear my old mind working to lead them, guide them along like I would if I could get up out of this damn wheelchair and take them by the hand.

5.2. Altar Call

Altar Call by Steven Sherrill

When Reverend Smawley plucked his right eyeball out—the plastic one—to hold over the congregation, the church-honeys swooned. Half the back-sliders, purse-lipped and guilt-washed, like they just eked out a church-poot. The others, whooping like no tomorrow. From the edge of the sagging stage, I heard everything clear as a bell. The tent went quiet. True reverence. Anticipation. Then a soft-wet thwack as the eyeball left the socket; that was all she wrote. Oh the weeping and wailing.

Besides folding chairs and passing collection plates, I drove, and played the organ. But—self-taught—by that time in the sermon, all I could do was keep up. Smawley stomping, hollering how “Jesus come down, as a piece of baling wire, and took that eye.” When medical science filled up the hole with a worthless bauble, Jesus came back. Blessed him with *special* sight. “Come on! Look into this hole! See for yourself” Every night, his good eye patched, he gave the call. Sinners spilled into the aisles ready for miracles, even meagre ones. Grocery lists, testimonials and prayer requests, offered up to that empty socket. Smawley read them all. “Go home,” he’d say. “Take them little red panties off and burn them. B’lieve on the Lord.” “Turn away from that bottle,” he’d say. “Towards Calvary.”

I looked into the hole one time. We’d stopped for gas. I came out with two cans of beer. A bag of pork grinds. Set them on the roof of the Plymouth while I pumped. The

Reverend, wore slap out from doing the Lord's work, clutching his thick Bible, slept. Head laid against the window. That eye—open—gaped heavenward. I knelt on the oil-stained pavement, pressed my nose to the glass. I looked into that hole. I seen it all. You better believe it.